

## **LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:     APRIL 28, 1997**

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### **LAST WEEK:**

#### **HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE MARKUP OF EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING-**

On Thursday, April 24th, the House Appropriations Committee (Chairman Bob Livingston, R-La.) marked up the FY'97 supplemental. The bill, as amended by the Committee, includes:

- \$150.7 million for the Emergency Watershed Program (a \$50 million increase from the Subcommittee mark)
- \$65 million for the Emergency Conservation Program (a \$20 million increase from the Subcommittee mark)

In addition, the full Committee retained language that would limit enrollment in CRP to 14 million acres. The legislation also supports the use of \$10 million of the funds to purchase floodplain easements. The committee stated that in the absence of final regulations, the funds would be used as a floodplain easement pilot. The legislation also prohibits use of the funds to support the salmon memorandum of understanding. Congressional sources have indicated that the House could act on the bill sometime this week and that the Senate would swiftly follow suit.

#### **AIR QUALITY TASK FORCE HEARING-**

The Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee of the House Agriculture Committee, held a hearing regarding the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) proposed air quality standards and their implications for the agricultural industry on April 23, 1997. Chief Paul Johnson provided the committee with information about how the agency's Air Quality Task Force was formed, what they have done thus far, and what future activities they will undertake. He also stated that the last Chief to testify before a committee on air quality, was Hugh Hammond Bennett in 1935 which resulted in the formation of the Soil Conservation Service. Chief Johnson noted that air quality and future productivity of agriculture are inextricably linked. He stated hope that the Air Quality Task Force would provide the EPA Administrator with information on the issue in the future, just as it will for the Secretary of Agriculture. Furthermore, he reported that USDA would be working with EPA to build consensus on standards for final rule publication. In addition, the Chief provided the panel with a roster of the Task Force and stressed the diverse background and expertise that comprises the panel. He also stated that a voluntary rather than a regulatory approach to the issue is the direction that should be taken.

The Chief was accompanied by Dr. Keith Saxton, Research Engineer with the Agricultural Research Service; Dr. John McClelland, Associate Director of the Office of

Energy and New Uses with Economic Research Service; and George Bluhm, National Meteorologist with NRCS and the designated Federal Official for the Agricultural Air Quality Task Force. Representatives of academia, producers groups, and manufacturing also provided testimony on the implications of PM 2.5 on the agricultural industry. The representatives feel that there is not the necessary research to proceed with the proposed PM 2.5 standards. They said the proposal will have serious implications to the agricultural community. Three of the representatives that testified serve on the Air Quality Task Force.

Congressman Charles W. Stenholm (D-TX) said we need to keep working together at the local level on the air quality issue. He said EPA should be at the table discussing this with agriculture. Other members stressed the need for farmers to be represented. They also urged the Department of Agriculture to take a position on the PM 2.5 standards.

#### **HEARING ON TIMBER AND MINING LAND BUYOUTS CANCELED-**

Energy and Mineral Resources Subcommittee (Chairman Cubin, R-Wyo.) of the House Resources Committee canceled a hearing on the administration's proposed buyouts of timber and mining lands using Mineral Leasing Act revenues. Specific cases to have been included in the hearing were the proposal for the New World Mine Project in Montana and the Headwaters Forest in California. A new date and time for the hearing has not yet been announced.

#### **GOVERNMENT TRAVEL-**

The House passed legislation last week (H.R. 930) that would require federal employees to use government credit cards when they travel. The aim of the bill is to ensure that the government can accrue frequent-flier miles and similar benefits. The sponsor of the bill, Steve Horn (R-CA) said the government would save \$80 million per/year under the bill. The Senate has not taken up the measure.

#### **LEGISLATION OF NOTE-**

The following bills were introduced of significance to NRCS and conservation:

<b>Bill</b>	<b>Member</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
S. 605	Conrad/Dorgan (ND)	To require the Secretary of Agriculture to provide emergency assistance to producers for cattle losses that are due to damaging weather or related conditions occurring during the 1996-97 winter season.
H.R. 1404	Waxman (CA)	Legislation would require votes on legislative provisions that reduce protection of the environment. Would require analysis of legislative impacts on the environment similar to current budgetary impact analysis.

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**THIS WEEK:**

**CRP EXTENSION LEGISLATION-**

Legislation to extend some CRP enrollments for an additional year may receive consideration on the House floor this week. H.R. 1342, introduced by Bob Smith (R-OR) would allow producers of some winter crops to receive a one year contract extension beginning in October. The bill also caps enrollment for FY98 at 30 million acres. Congressional sources have indicated that the H.R. 1342 may appear on the House calendar under suspension of the rules for Tuesday, April 29th.

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**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**WETLANDS REGULATIONS-**

Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman Boehlert, R-N.Y.) of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee will hold a hearing on recent regulatory and judicial developments in wetland issues.

April 29            10:00 a.m.      2167 Rayburn Building

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